

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2616

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMCONSUL LOURNCO MARQUES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT AO

SUBJECT: EX-PRISONERS PRESS CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY: GROUP OF RECENTLY RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD MARATHON PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 14, ASSISTED BY LEFTIST COALITION "MOVIMENTO DEMOCRATICO" (MD). DISCUSSING PRISON CAMP LIFE AT CAMPS IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA AND CAPE VERDE, SEVEN FORMER PRISONERS (OF 2000 PRISONERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS SO FAR RELEASED) DESCRIBED BRUTAL PRACTICES AND SUMMARY EXECUTIONS BY GUARDS. NON-MEDIA (MOSTLY MD ACTIVISTS) QUESTIONERS PRESSED CONTINUALLY AND GENERALLY SUCCESSFULLY FOR NAMES, DATES, DETAILS AND CORROBORATION. REPRESENTATIVES OF FOREIGN PRESS PRESENT, AS WAS CONGEN OFFICER.

2. EX-PRISONERS: MOST WERE IN MID-THIRTIES TO MID-FORTIES, 3 WERE CAPE VERDEANS, ALL BUT ONE MESTIZOS. ALL BUT TWO WERE EX-MPLA (SYMPATHIZERS AND ACTIVISTS), ALL BUT ONE APPARENTLY WELL EDUCATED AND POISED. ONLY AUTHENTIC RURAL BLACK ANGOLAN, EX SOBA (CHIEF) OF A DEMBOS AREA VILLAGE, RECOUNTED MOST EXTREME PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL TORTURE, REPEATED BEATINGS. (TRUE TO PORTUGUESE FORM, THE AUDIENCE "LIBERALS" AND THE MESTIZO EX-PRISONERS TREATED HIM CURTLY AND CONDESCENDINGLY, YELLING AT HIM

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TO TAKE OFF HIS SHIRT TO SHOW HIS SCARS.)

3. CAMPS: FACT CAMPS WERE LOCATED IN INHOSPITABLE DESERT AREA COUPLED WITH PRACTICE OF ADMINISTRATORS AND GUARDS MISAPPROPRIATING CAMP FUNDS (AND INTERCEPTING ALL PARCELS SENT TO PRISONERS) APPEARS TO HAVE CAUSED MORE PAIN AND DEATH THAN SPORADIC SADISM OF GUARDS (WHO WERE PARTLY PSP, PARTLY DGS).

4. DEATH BY FUTEBOL AND CRUCIFIXION FOR FOILED ESCAPEES: IN 1967 ACCORDING TO ONE EX-PRISONER 12 PRISONERS ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE, 4 SUCCEEDED AND 8 WERE CAUGHT. FOUR OF THE 8 WERE SHOT ON THE SPOT, OTHER 4 WERE CRUCIFIED OUTSIDE THE CAMP'S BARRACKS. (ONE OF THE CRUCIFIED ESCAPEES WAS REMOVED FROM CROSS STILL ALIVE, SUBSEQUENTLY TRUSSED UP AND USED AS TARGET BY PRISONERS WHO WERE FORCED TO KICK SOCCER BALL AT HIM UNTIL HE DIED.) ONE PRISONER WAS ALLEGEDLY BEATEN TO DEATH FOR ASKING FOR EXTRA WATER. ANOTHER OCCASION PRISONER WAS TIED OUTSIDE BARRACKS AND PRISONERS WERE FORCED TO BEAT HIM EACH TIME THEY WANTED TO GO TO LATRINES.

5. OVENS?: PRISONERS ALLEGED CREMATIONS, CITED LARGE OVENS WHICH ADMINISTRATORS SAID WERE USED TO BAKE BREAD (WHICH WAS BROUGHT IN, NOT BAKED AT CAMP). CHARRED HUMAN BONES ALLEGEDLY FOUND NEAR CAMP. OVEN STORY, HOWEVER, ENTIRELY HEARSAY: SOME EX-PRISONERS APPEARED NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCED THEMSELVES.

6. EX-GOVERNOR GENERAL REBOCHO VAZ: TWO PRISONERS RELATED TWO SEPARATE INCIDENTS IN 1968 WHERE FORMER GOVGEN ALLEGEDLY PERSONALLY ORDERED SUMMARY EXECUTIONS.

7. MISCELLANEOUS: ALSO DESCRIBED WERE TRADITIONAL DGS INTERROGATIONS IN LUANDA: SLEEP DEPRIVATION, CIGARETTE BURNS, GENITAL BEATINGS,

8. DGS AND COURTS: EX-PRISONERS DESCRIBED REPEATED CASES OF MILITARY COURTS ORDERING PRISONER RELEASED ONLY TO HAVE DGS TRANSFER HIM TO ANOTHER CAMP. ON ONE OCCASION WHEN FOOD CONDITIONS WORSENERD PRISONERS APPEALED TO DISTRICT GOVERNOR AT MOCAMEDES (MILITARY OFFICER AT TIME) WHO SENT FOOD. ONE ADMINISTRATOR (JOSE DAVID CAMPOS) REPORTEDLY WAS YANKED BY DGS FOR BEING "SOFT" ON PRISONERS.

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9. PRESS: S. AFRICAN, ENGLISH AND U.S. (.NYT) CORRESPONDENTS PRESENT. LOCAL LUANDA JOURNALIST WALKED OUT ALONG WITH LISBON REPORTER BECAUSE MD TYPES TRIED TO MAKE THEM PROVIDE FULLER ENGLISH TRANSLATION. OUR JOURNALIST FRIEND MUMBLED ON LEAVING HE IS ALREADY "IN TROUBLE" FOR MAKING TOO MANY DETAILS OF DGS PRACTICES AVAILABLE TO FOREIGN PRESS. SUBSEQUENT TRANSLATION FURNISHED BY MD MEMBER WHO HIMSELF AT TIMES SOFT-PEDALLED EXTENT OF DGS BRUTALITY. LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OMITTED HARSHER DETAILS

OF PRISON EXPERIENCES.

10. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WELL-ORCHESTRATED, REVELATIONS NONETHELESS  
HAD GENERAL RING OF TRUTH. SEVERAL DESCRIPTIONS TOO AGITATED TO  
HAVE BEEN FAKED. TOTAL EMPHASIS ON EXTRACTING HARD INFO GAVE EVENT  
AIR OF GRAND JURY PROCEEDING. MD TYPES IN AUDIENCE PROMISED  
CONTINUING EFFORT TO TRACK DOWN ALL THE GUILTY. PRIVATELY,  
SEVERAL EX-PRISONERS SAID THEY WILL PLUNGE RIGHT BACK INTO MPLA  
WORK, ESCHEWING ALL OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS.  
BRIGGS

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